



How to Improve Executive Presence

By Jenna Ghisolfo, Founder of Still Standing in Heels Consulting

Practical ways to strengthen confidence, credibility, communication, and influence as a leader.

Executive presence is not about being the loudest person in the room, having the biggest title, or changing who you are. It is the ability to communicate with confidence, remain composed under pressure, build trust, make thoughtful decisions, and create a sense of credibility when you lead. The good news is that executive presence is not something you either have or do not have. It can be intentionally developed.

What Is Executive Presence?

Executive presence is the combination of how a leader **shows up, communicates, responds, and influences**. People with strong executive presence create confidence in others. They can communicate a difficult message without creating unnecessary chaos, contribute strategically in important conversations, listen without becoming defensive, and remain grounded when the pressure rises. It is less about perfection and more about consistency, self-awareness, and intentional leadership.

For emerging leaders, managers, executives, CEOs, business owners, and professionals preparing for advancement, strengthening executive presence can affect how others perceive readiness, credibility, and leadership potential. It also helps leaders build stronger relationships, navigate conflict, communicate change, and represent their organization more effectively.

1. Know How You Are Experienced by Others

Self-awareness is the foundation of executive presence. Consider not only what you intend to communicate, but how your communication, tone, body language, responsiveness, and decision-making are experienced by other people. Ask for thoughtful feedback from people who will be candid with you. Look for patterns rather than reacting to one comment.

2. Communicate With Clarity

Strong leaders do not make people work unnecessarily hard to understand them. Before an important meeting or conversation, identify the message, the outcome you need, and the action you want people to take. Reduce overexplaining, avoid filling every silence, and practice making your point with confidence and purpose.

3. Strengthen Your Confidence Without Losing Authenticity

Confidence does not require pretending to know everything. In fact, executive presence often grows when leaders become comfortable saying, 'I need more information,' asking a strong question, or acknowledging a mistake. The goal is to become secure enough in your leadership to be both decisive and teachable.

4. Learn to Stay Composed Under Pressure

People pay close attention to leaders when things go wrong. Your response to conflict, criticism, uncertainty, missed goals, or organizational change can shape how safe and confident others feel. Develop habits that help you pause, gather facts, regulate your response, and communicate intentionally rather than reacting emotionally.

5. Become a Stronger Listener

Executive presence is not only demonstrated when you are speaking. Leaders build credibility by asking thoughtful questions, listening for what is not being said, and making people feel heard without automatically agreeing with everything they hear. Listening improves judgment, relationships, and decision-making.

6. Improve Your Body Language and Delivery

Posture, eye contact, facial expressions, pace, vocal tone, and physical presence all influence how a message is received. This is not about creating a performance. It is about ensuring your nonverbal communication supports the confidence and clarity of the message you intend to deliver.

7. Think Beyond the Immediate Problem

Executive presence becomes stronger when a leader can connect today's issue to the larger organizational picture. Ask how a decision affects people, finances, customers or communities, operations, culture, and long-term goals. Strategic thinking helps others see you as someone capable of leading beyond your current responsibilities.

8. Handle Difficult Conversations Directly and Respectfully

Avoiding a difficult conversation can weaken credibility just as quickly as handling one poorly. Prepare the facts, separate assumptions from evidence, communicate expectations clearly, listen to the other perspective, and identify what needs to happen next. Respect and accountability can exist in the same conversation.

9. Build Credibility Through Follow-Through

Presence without reliability is temporary. If you say you will do something, do it. If circumstances change, communicate. Leaders strengthen trust when their words, decisions, expectations, and actions consistently align.

10. Practice Before the Moment Matters

Executive presence is built through repetition. Practice presentations, prepare for high-stakes meetings, role-play difficult conversations, seek coaching, and intentionally work on one or two leadership behaviors at a time. Small improvements practiced consistently can create a significant change in how a leader shows up.

Executive Presence Is Different for Every Leader

There is no single personality type that owns executive presence. An introverted leader can have extraordinary presence. A warm and collaborative leader can be highly authoritative. A direct leader can learn to communicate with greater empathy without losing decisiveness. The objective is not to turn leaders into a

corporate stereotype. It is to help them identify the strongest version of their own leadership style and understand when that style needs to adapt to the audience, situation, and outcome.

How Still Standing in Heels Consulting Helps

Still Standing in Heels Consulting provides customized **executive coaching, executive presence training, leadership development, communication training, emotional intelligence development, new manager training, strategic thinking support, and leadership team development**. We work with individuals and organizations to identify where a leader is today, what may be limiting their effectiveness, and what specific behaviors and skills will help them reach the next level.

Development may include one-on-one coaching, leadership assessments, real-world practice, presentation preparation, difficult-conversation coaching, customized half-day workshops, team retreats, and ongoing professional development. The focus is practical: leaders should be able to use what they learn in their next meeting, conversation, presentation, decision, or leadership challenge.

**Executive presence is not about taking up more space.
It is about making the space you occupy matter.**

Still Standing in Heels Consulting
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